Snepp Seeks Permission To Publish Two Articles

By Jane Seaberry
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Former Central Intelligence Agency agent Frank W. Snepp III has asked a federal judge to stay his order restricting what Snepp can write about the CIA and allow him to publish an essay on government officials and a romantic short story about a CIA agent in Saigon.

Last July, after a two-day hearing on the publication of "Decent Interval," Snepp's unauthorized account of CIA operations in Vietnam, U.S. District Court Judge Oren R. Lewis ruled that Snepp could not write anything about the CIA without prior agency review.

Yesterday Snepp said in a three-page affidavit that the ruling prohibits him from submitting to two national magazines two recently completed articles touching on his experiences as a CIA officer in Vietnam. Snepp has asked that the judge stay his order pending appeal of ruling so that he can continue his new-found career as a writer.

Snepp claims Lewis' ruling is overbroad concerning the two articles and that neither contains classified information. During Snepp's trial, the government never contended that his book contained classified material. But Lewis said that "Snepp is not the judge of what portions, if any, of CIA's intelligence may be made public."

According to Snepp's affidavit, last Thursday he completed an essay that "is a reflection on how government officials compromise their personal beliefs and views in order to stay in step with official policies and perceptions of events. The essay includes a number of vignettes concerning State Department officials whom I knew in Vietnam while serving with the CIA."

The essay "also includes reflection on the compromises which I made while in government service" and information on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam that has already been made public, Snepp said.

Snepp said he finished last Sunday a short story "set in Saigon concerning a romantic relationship between a CIA officer and a French woman. The story is based on observations which I made while serving with the CIA in Vietnam."

Lewis' ruling places "a real and present burden on my First Amendment right to publish and my Fifth Amendment right to practice my chosen profession," Snepp said in the affidavit.

If Lewis refuses to grant a stay, Snepp's lawyers will ask that the order be lifted concerning just the two articles, according to court papers.